

It is very difficult for many to find a job at their age if they have never worked outside their homes. Women in their late 50s who are dependent on their husbands' Social Security are left with no means of support if their spouses die.

My bill would amend the Social Security Act to reduce from 60 to 55 the age at which an individual who is otherwise eligible may be paid widows' or widowers' insurance benefits.

Finally, I have introduced H.R. 2125, the "Continued Benefits for Injured Military Spouses Act". Under current law, enacted in 1982, former spouses of military members or retirees are eligible for military medical benefits and exchange and commissary privileges if the military member had performed at least 20 years of military service, had been married for at least 20 years to one spouse, and 20 years of marriage and service were overlapping. This is known as the 20/20/20 restriction. Further legislation was enacted 2 years later to include additional former spouses under a 20/20/15 restriction.

While this law recognizes the contribution and sacrifice of many military spouses who later divorced, there is a group who are completely left out through no fault of their own. Spouses who must leave a marriage through divorce due to documented abuse are often left with none of these benefits. Domestic violence and physical or sexual endangerment to the spouse or the children, proven by medical or counseling records, should be taken into account. Divorced because of this situation, the injured spouse should continue to receive benefits.

H.R. 2125 will change the law to 20/20/10 only for these special circumstances, meaning that the military member would have been married for at least 20 years to one spouse, would have performed at least 20 years of military service, with 10 years of service and marriage overlapping. This change would allow an abused spouse to escape from a potentially dangerous marriage and still keep benefits.

Most of our military members are honorable and good people. But, in the few cases where spousal or child abuse is involved, we must protect the families. I invite my colleagues to join me in support of military spouses who have found themselves in dangerous marriages, in support of fairer taxes for senior citizens, and in support of widows' benefits for surviving spouses who are 55 and older.

#### HONORING SAM RAMPELLO

#### HON. JIM DAVIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 5, 2005*

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Sam Rampello, a tireless advocate for Hillsborough County, Florida's public schools. Sam's passing this weekend silences a passionate voice for our young people.

A Tampa native and graduate of Jesuit High School and the University of Tampa, Sam spent his career working to improve our local schools. He started by teaching history at Plant High School, and then went on to serve as a history professor at the University of Tampa. But it wasn't long before he came back to the public school system, working as

dean of boys at Leto High School, then as assistant principal at Jefferson High School.

In 1972, Sam worked as director of Hillsborough Community College's temporary airport campus and a year later joined the Hillsborough County planning commission. In 1976, Gov. Reubin Askew appointed Sam to the Hillsborough County School board, where he served for nearly 18 years.

Humble by nature, Sam's focus was always on the best interests of his students and his persistent goal was to help make our schools the best they can be. His steadfast faith allowed Sam to see the potential in everyone—particularly our students and those who help them succeed.

Last year, in honor of all his work, a school was named in Sam's honor. When the Sam Rampello Downtown Partnership School opens next year, it will serve as a living testament to Sam's dedication to Hillsborough County Schools.

On behalf of the entire Tampa Bay community, I would like to thank Sam for all of his good deeds and extend my deepest sympathies to his family.

#### IN HONOR OF CURTIS HIGH SCHOOL UPON ITS RECEIPT OF THE COLLEGE BOARD'S 2005 INSPIRATION AWARD

#### HON. VITO FOSSELLA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 5, 2005*

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to recognize today the great achievements of a high school in my hometown of Staten Island: Curtis High School (CHS). This important educational institution has just been given a \$25,000 check from the College Board to accompany the school's receipt of the 2005 Inspiration Award. The Board levies this honor annually on only 3 schools that help students achieve equitable access to higher education despite social, economic, and cultural challenges. A focus on attendance led to CHS' receipt of the award this year. The school's pioneering programs have led to 90 percent attendance rate and an 88 percent rate of graduation. Such a feat is truly amazing considering the schools' circumstances.

CHS is a 100-year-old Gothic-style building, embellished with gargoyles and ornate stone archways. The school has an active alumni association, and many of its teachers are graduates, but CHS has changed dramatically since the days when it served a small, homogeneous middle-class community.

Today, Curtis High School functions at 160 percent of capacity. Forty-six percent of its students are documented at or below the federal poverty level, and more than half of its students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Among its racially diverse population of more than 2,600 students, 40 percent are white, 33 percent are black, and 20 percent are Hispanic. The school also serves children who are recent immigrants from Latin America, West Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

Curtis High School credits its success to 10 small learning communities called "houses." Every freshman who enters CHS chooses among the themed tracks, which include such varied subjects as the performing arts, Junior

ROTC, business and computer science, nursing, and journalism. Each house has unique electives that develop the student's particular talents and interests—be it dance, computer graphic design, or law—while maintaining a college-preparatory curriculum for all students.

The school also offers afternoon and weekend tutoring programs, active college counseling, and a mentoring program that targets recent immigrants and students with little parental guidance. The Career Connections program, a partnership among CHS, local businesses, and other community-based organizations, helps students to upgrade their résumés by finding paid internships and part-time employment opportunities. Principal Curtis has also introduced programs for parents, such as "Parents As Art Partners," which offers a free photography class, to create more parent involvement at the school.

These innovative initiatives and the school's commitment to its 3 foundations of success, "Attendance, Attitude and Achievement," have allowed literally thousands of children to gain a high school diploma in the face of tremendous odds. In doing so, such efforts have put these children on the path to a better life, free from the shackles of poverty. I am honored to recognize this fine institution and hope its efforts serve as a model for schools throughout the country. The CHS example shows there is no limit to human ingenuity and that through creativity, commitment and perseverance, we can provide a better life for generations to come.

#### THE ACT TO PROVIDE MEMORIAL MARKERS FOR THOSE WHO DIED WHILE SERVING OVERSEAS

#### HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 5, 2005*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to introduce a bill that will help families memorialize those who died in service to our country and are buried in cemeteries overseas. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, those servicemembers whose remains are classified as "unavailable for burial" are eligible for government-provided memorial markers or headstones. While this classification includes those whose remains have not been recovered or who were buried at sea, there is one glaring exception to this definition—those who died fighting for freedom abroad and were laid to rest there.

The United States currently has 24 permanent overseas burial grounds that are the final resting place for nearly 125,000 of our bravest men and women who died serving our country. These sites are the responsibility of the American Battle Monuments Commission and are a wonderful tribute to those buried there. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs maintains that because these graves can be visited, there is no need to provide families at home with a memorial marker for their deceased loved ones.

We should not deny these families the ability to obtain memorial markers when we already do it for so many others. To correct this, my legislation will add overseas burials to the VA's "unavailable for burial" classification and finally let these men and women be memorialized by their families here at home.